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# HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE  
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

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SUBJECT: HOW WELL FED ARE WE? Information from food economists in the Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics and the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

This is Wartime Nutrition Month, the date we've marked on our calendar to talk about better food habits for more people and to put words into practice by eating wisely.

"Wartime Nutrition" raises the question - how well fed are we?

Food from the farms of America goes to feed our army, the largest in the history of the United States. It helps feed our allies. It helps feed the people of the liberated nations.

How about the people at home? Are we faring well on wartime diets? On rationed foodstuffs?

Answering from our own experience, most of us say "yes". There have been shortages, of course. We've had to vary our menus because sometimes we couldn't find the product we had in mind when we went to the grocery store. But we've always found enough to provide good well-balanced meals, and at times there has actually been an abundance of food.

A study made by two food economists of the United States Department of Agriculture, Faith Clark and Lois Nelson, gives a pretty good picture of how well the people of America have fared during the war years.

From records of the United States food supply and use for 13 years - from 1930 through 1943, these food economists found:

There has been increased food production each year since 1935. Widespread drouth cut our food supply that year. The farms of America broke all production

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records in 1941, 1942 and 1943.

And the people of the United States have been better fed too. Even in 1943, when a fourth of our food supply went to fill war needs, and a half of the remainder was under ration control, we fared better than we did in the pre-war years, 1935 to 1939.

Records used in this study of America's eating habits measured not only the amounts of food produced but also the nutritive values of the food - the calories, the protein, the vitamins, the minerals.

Since the number of calories a person can use day in and day out is limited unless he wishes to gain weight, it's not surprising that the relative food energy or caloric value of this nation's food supply has remained fairly constant since 1930.

The study shows that we've eaten more meat, poultry, milk and eggs since 1940 than we did during the thirties.

We've been getting about the same supply of vitamin A. About half of this comes from plant products, especially green and yellow vegetables. The rest of it from eggs, milk, butter and liver.

We've been getting more vitamin C. We're eating more tomatoes and citrus fruits. Largest single increase has been in the consumption of oranges. Twice as many oranges were on the market in 1943 as in 1930. And oranges are one of the most popular sources of vitamin C.

We're getting more riboflavin too. That's the nutrient that promotes growth and general good health. We get it from milk and we've increased our consumption of milk by 25 per cent in the last 10 years. That means we're getting more calcium too, because milk is rich in calcium.

We also get riboflavin from enriched flour and bread, and enrichment has also added iron, vitamin B<sub>1</sub> and niacin to our diets - all essential to good health.



Food economists of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Labor collected records from individual families in the spring of 1942 to learn more about America's wartime eating. They found that families were using more of the protective foods - more milk, eggs, fruits and vegetables than they had used in 1936. Families were eating more wisely, partly because they had higher incomes and partly because they had learned better food habits.

In many ways, the study is encouraging. The farms of America have furnished an adequate food supply during these war years. Many families have improved their food habits.

But the study also points to another side of the picture. We should not lose sight of the fact that there are still many persons in this country whose incomes have not risen as the cost of food has gone up. There are many families, whose meals do not include enough of the necessary protective foods - milk, fresh greens and yellow vegetables, tomatoes and citrus fruits.

Our farm need to produce more of the protective foods. If all families were to follow a moderate-cost food plan which would assure good nutrition, at least a fifth more milk and citrus fruits and tomatoes would be needed than were available in 1943. Our farms would have to grow twice as many green and yellow vegetables as they produced last year.

And Wartime Nutrition Month reminds us that we must not relax our efforts to produce food and to see that everyone has the means and the knowledge to buy the foods needed for an adequate diet.



